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FIRST REPORT ON HORTA AUSTRALIAN VISIT

JOSE RAMOS HORTA'S CURRENT VISIT IS THE SECOND TO AUSTRALIA BY FRETILIN IN 12 MONTHS, UNDERLINING THE IMPORTANCE PLACED BY THE EAST TIMOR LIBERATION MOVEMENT ON AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN THE SEARCH FOR AN ACCEPTABLE DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO THE EAST TIMOR ISSUE.

UNDER THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT (LIBERAL) FRETILIN WERE BANNED FROM ENTERING AUSTRALIA. HORTA, WHO IS MAKING HIS FIRST VISIT SINCE 1975 ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA ON MAY 27 FOR A 7 WEEK VISIT DUE TO FINISH ON JULY 14.

HIS VISIT IS SPONSORED BY THE AUSTRALIAN COALITION FOR EAST TIMOR, A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EAST TIMOR SUPPORT GROUPS, AS PART OF A CAMPAIGN TO WIN THE SUPPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF EAST TIMOR.

THE ALP WILL HOLD ITS BIENNIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE AT CANBERRA'S LAKESIDE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL FROM JULY 9-13. EAST TIMOR, URANIUM, FOREIGN MILITARY BASES AND THE ENTRANCE OF FOREIGN BANKS ARE REGARDED AS THE MOST SENSITIVE ISSUES FOR THE CONFERENCE WHOSE DECISIONS ARE BINDING ON THE GOVERNMENT.

SO FAR HORTA HAS VISITED CANBERRA, SYDNEY, NEWCASTLE,WOLLONGONG, BRISBANE, DARWIN, PERTH AND ADELAIDE CONCENTRATING ON MEETINGS WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS AND KEY MEMBERS OF THE ALP.

THE PRIME MINISTER, BOB HAWKE, HAS REFUSED TO SEE HIM ON THE GROUNDS THAT AUSTRALIA DOES NOT RECOGNISE FRETILIN. AT A MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON JUNE 8, BILL HAYDEN WHO HAD INITIALLY REFUSED TO SEE HORTA, PRAISED INDONESIA FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY IN EAST TIMOR, BLAMED FRETILIN FOR THE BREAKDOWN OF THE CEASEFIRE LAST YEAR AND RULED OUT ANY FUTURE POLITICAL ROLE FOR AUSTRALIA. HOWEVER OTHER KEY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN MORE OPEN(WITH)FOUR MINISTERS, A LARGE NUMBER OF LEFT WINGERS AND SOME KEY RIGHT WING FIGURES ALL EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR HORTA'S PROPOSALS. IT IS NOW WIDELY THOUGHT THAT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE WILL AT LEAST ENDORSE A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE IN SUPPORT OF TALKS ON EAST TIMOR AND MAY EVEN REAFFIRM EXISTING POLICY WHICH REJECTS INDONESIA'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER EAST TIMOR AND CALLS FOR AUSTRALIA TO VOTE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION ATT THE UN.

APART FROM HORTA'S INPUT,TWO OTHER FACTORS HAVE COMBINED TO WEAKEN HAYDEN'S PRO-INDONESIA STANCE. THESE ARE INDONESIA'S CANCELLATION OF AN AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS FACT FINDING MISSION TO EAST TIMOR AND RENEWED INDONESIAN MILITARY ACTIVITY IN WEST IRIAN RESULTING IN THE EXODUS OF SOME 8000 WEST IRIAN REFUGEES INTO AUSTRALIA'S FORMER COLONY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA.
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IN A SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB ON MAY 31, HORTA CALLED ON AUSTRALIA TO CEASE ITS SUPPORT FOR INDONESIA AT THE UN AND TO PAY THE ROLE OF AN HONEST BROKER ON THE EAST TIMOR QUESTION. THE RECORD SHOWS, HE DECLARED, THAT APPEASEMENT OF JAKARTA ONLY ENCOURAGES FURTHER OPPRESSION. HE BELIEVES A PEACE INITIATIVE BY AUSTRALIA WOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, MELANESIAN COUNTRIES IN THE REGION, CHINA, PORTUGAL, SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE US CONGRESS. THE ALTERNATIVE TO A PEACE EFFORT BY AUSTRALIA, DIRECTED AT GETTING INDONESIA, FRETILIN AND OTHERS TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE, IS THE CONTINUATION OF A CONFLICT THAT HAS REACHED THE DIMENSIONS OF GENOCIDE, SAID HORTA.

AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN JAKARTA IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HORTA'S APPEAL, THE INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER DR MOCHTAR FLATLY REJECTED HORTA'S PROPOSAL.

HORTA HAS ADDRESSED WELL ATTENDED PUBLIC MEETINGS IN EACH CITY AND ISPRESENTLY IN CANBERRA FOR A SOUTH PACIFIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONFERENCE.

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